(b) whether the Ministry has taken steps to grant funds for EAS programmes and for other rural development programmes in recent months to Assam?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) The full Central share of funds for Rural Development Programmes could not be released to the Government of Assam last year and so far in the current year because the State authorities did not release the State matching share, as required under the Guidelines of the Schemes and Programmes. The requisite Utilisation Certificates and Audit Reports were also not furnished by the State authorities in respect of various Schemes.

The State Government have since indicated willingness to release the State share for the current year and it has, accordingly, been agreed, in principle, to release Instalments for the current year for the EAS (and other Rural Development Programmes), subject to a commitment by the Government of Assam that sanction and release of the matching share of the State for the current year will be ensured by the end of the financial year, 2001-2002.

Corruption in implementation of anti-poverty programmes

1179. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a large-scale corruption and payoffs to middle men under various anti-poverty programmes;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the measures being taken by Government to ensure clean distribution and implementation of these developmental programmes; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) No Sir, the question does not arise. The Audit and Utilisation Certificates furnished by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), which is a precondition for

releasing money, do not indicate any cases of large scale corruption and payoffs to middle men under various poverty alleviation programmes.

(c) and (d) Apart from seeking Audit Reports from Chartered Accountants and periodic audit of the DRDAs by the Pay and Accounts Division of the Ministry of Rural Development and by the C&AG, it is also mandatory for the DRDAs to furnish certificates regarding non-embezzlement, non-diversion of funds etc. Vigilance and Monitoring Committees have also been formed at the Block, District and State levels to oversee the implementation of the various Rural Development Programmes. The Governing Body of the DRDAs, which approves the projects to be implemented at the grass root level also oversees clean distribution and implementation of these developmental programmes. The Area Officers Scheme, under which senior officers of the Ministry of Rural Development visit the rural areas for an on the spot assessment of the implementation of the Rural Development Schemes, is also meant to ensure proper implementation of the programmes.

Self-employment of disadvantaged sections of rural areas

1180. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan for the rural youth, Women, SCs, STs and other disadvantaged sections of the rural areas to make them self-employed and wage employable, being implemented or proposed to be implemented by his Ministry; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) The schemes being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development for the benefit of persons Below the Poverty Line (BPL) including the rural youth, women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other disadvantaged sections in rural areas for self-employment and wage-employment are: